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W^m Fletcher Shaw,

Reprinted from *The Journal of Obstetrics and Gynaecology of the British Empire*,

Vol. LV, No. 3, June 1948.

SIR FRANCIS CHAMPNEYS, BT., M.A., M.D., F.R.C.P.

*Address given by Sir William Fletcher Shaw, M.D., F.R.C.O.G., at the
Centenary Commemoration Service held at St. Bartholomew-the-Great,
Smithfield, on 25th March, 1948.*

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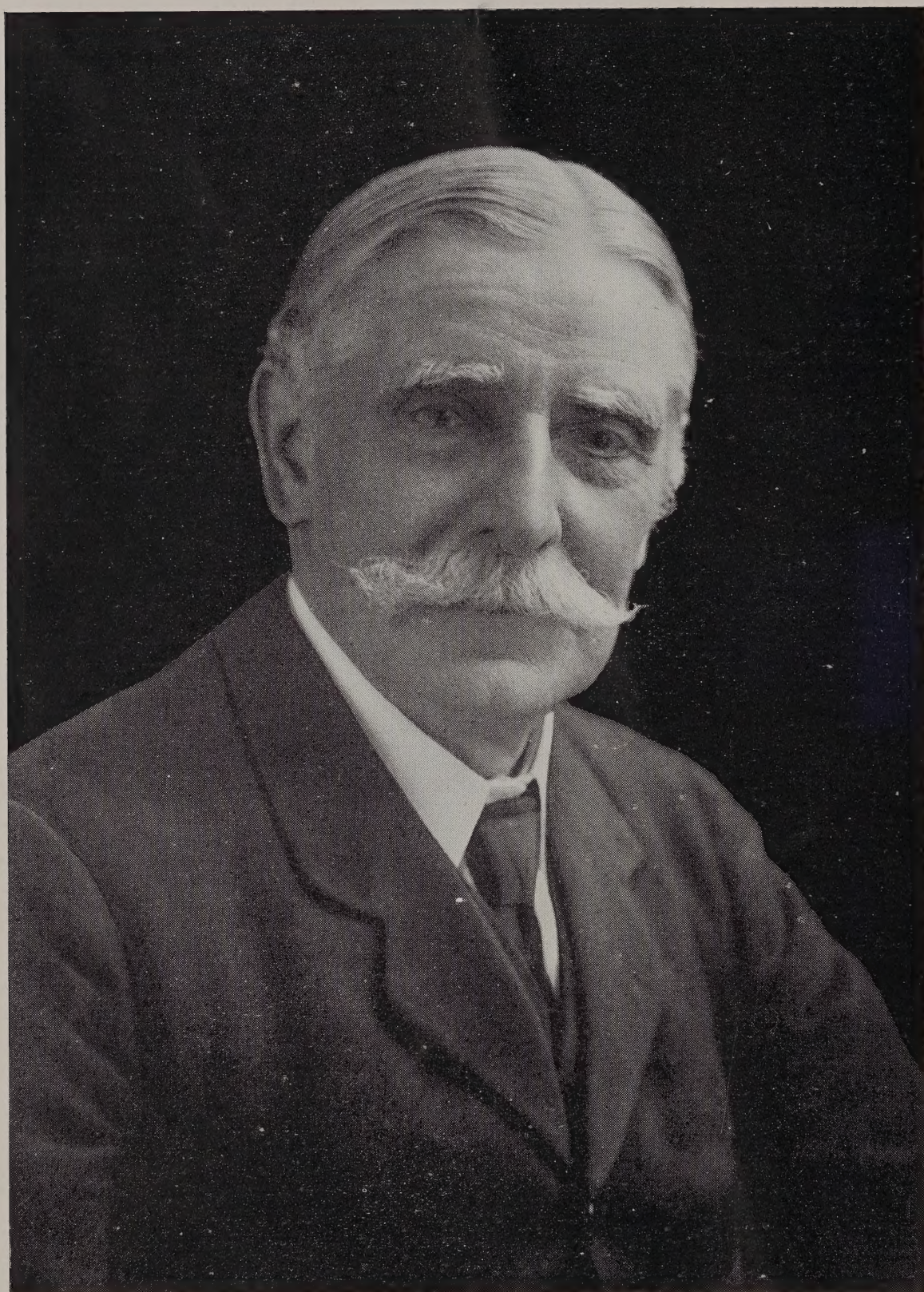
The Journal of
Obstetrics and Gynaecology
of the British Empire

Vol. LV, No. 3, June 1948.

ALTRINCHAM
JOHN SHERRATT AND SON

Report of the
The Journal of
Obstetrics and Gynecology
of the British Empire
Vol. LV, No. 1, 1918





SIR FRANCIS CHAMPNEYS, BT., M.A., M.D., F.R.C.P.

Address given by Sir William Fletcher Shaw, M.D., F.R.C.O.G., at the Centenary Commemoration Service held at St. Bartholomew-the-Great, Smithfield, on 25th March, 1948.

WE are met to-day to commemorate the centenary of the birth, and to give thanks for the life and work, of one of the notable leaders in medicine. This congregation, representing so many diverse organizations for which he laboured, is proof of the catholicity of his interests. From some of these, his school and his Oxford college, he derived great benefits which he repaid by a lifelong devotion and love. From others, the Royal College of Physicians and the three great hospitals whose staff he adorned, St. George's, St. Bartholomew's and the General Lying-in, he also derived great benefits, which he returned with great services in addition to his love and devotion.

Of the remainder here represented the balance sheet is chiefly on the debtor side. Some he helped in their foundation, and to all he gave unremitting labour, organizing ability, wise counsel and support.

It is well, therefore, that we should pause for a few moments in this busy and troubled world to reflect upon the man who left his mark on so many facets of public and medical life.

Born of an ancient line which traces its descent to Garcia de Ximenes, King of Navarre and Count of Champagne, whence the name Champneys, and established in this country by Sir John Champneys, one of the Conqueror's Knights, Sir Francis inherited characteristics which we proudly acclaim as English—love of his country, belief in his fellow men, hatred of injustice,

bulldog tenacity of purpose, a smiling face in defeat, a spirit of compromise in non-essentials, and above all, a transparent honesty and hatred of subterfuge.

A son of the Very Reverend William Weldon Champneys, D.D., Canon of St. Paul's, and later Dean of Lichfield, his youth was spent in a happy and sympathetic atmosphere with a deeply religious background, and religion remained, throughout his life, a main driving force and guide.

Born in the early days of Victoria's reign, when England's trade and wealth and overseas possessions were expanding by leaps and bounds, and when the preparation for a profession did not necessitate too early a specialized training, he received a sound classical education at Winchester, an education which remained a cultural background throughout his life.

In his early home he developed a habit of hard work which he retained to the end of his days and which, allied to a strong constitution and a sound intellect, brought their reward in a scholarship to Winchester, an Exhibition to Brasenose College, a First-Class in Natural Science, membership of the staff of St. George's, St. Bartholomew's and the General Lying-in Hospital, and finally the acknowledged leadership in the branch of medicine he had early adopted.

He firmly believed in a healthy mind being sustained by a healthy body, and he had a distinguished athletic career both at school and the university. Later, when a busy practice and irregular hours made

organized games impossible, he kept himself in good condition with bicycling, walking and gardening.

One other characteristic derived from his ancestry and developed by training in a cultured background was his love of music, a love which remained a vital force throughout his life, bringing mental relaxation and pleasure in his most active years, comfort and solace in his declining and lonely ones. The organ was his earliest and remained his favourite instrument.

It is recorded that at the early age of 12, in the absence, through sudden illness, of the organist George Cooper, whose pupil he was, young Francis played the organ, although his feet could not reach the pedals, for the Sunday services in the nearby Church of St. Sepulchre, Holborn, and through this medium he has given us, amongst many others, the anthem and hymns sung at this service.

His work as an obstetrician and teacher in these three great hospitals gradually brought him renown until, in his heyday, he had one of the largest private practices, and was in constant demand all over the country and even on the continent—a life of unremitting toil and anxiety, possible only to one with the best of constitutions.

His marriage in 1876 to Virginia Julian, only daughter of Sir John Warrender Dalrymple, was a particularly happy one.

His wife brought to him new artistic interests and supplied the happy domestic atmosphere so essential for the relaxation of a man working to the limit of his powers.

It is, however, not as a clinician or as a teacher that his name remains alive to-day, but as one who gave, even in the busiest period of practice and later in his retirement, continuous labour and organizing ability to the foundation or support of movements for the betterment of his fellow men or of his profession.

He strongly supported Sir William Japp

Sinclair in founding the *Journal of Obstetrics and Gynaecology of the British Empire* in 1901, was one of the first directors of this Journal and became Chairman on the retirement of Sir John Williams in 1907. During the first Great War the publication was suspended but when it was revived as a monthly journal in 1921 he was persuaded, in spite of his age, to retain this post.

Of all these activities, the one which owes most to him and gave, even in his life-time, the greatest return to womanhood, is the midwives' service of this country, now one of the best in the world. This is his permanent memorial.

Although obstetrics, like general medicine and surgery, began its scientific foundation in the 16th and 17th centuries, since when our knowledge has gradually increased, little was done to improve the training of the midwives, who still continued to attend a large proportion of the confinements in this country. True it is that sporadic attempts were made in various centres and at different times, but there was no co-ordination and, at the end of the last century, the main mass of the midwives remained as in mediaeval times, drawn from the uneducated classes and largely self-trained.

In 1872 the London Obstetrical Society set up a Board to conduct a voluntary examination of midwives and to grant certificates that the successful ones were "competent to attend natural labours". This lead was followed by a few teaching hospitals in other centres, and it was common, at the end of the century, to see large brass plates on many houses in the working-class districts: *Mrs. A. B., Certified Midwife by Hospital.*

This movement, good as it was, scarcely touched the fringe of the problem. Women were still free to practise midwifery with-

out these certificates, and even if these had become universal there was no regularized training and no supervision of the work of those in practice.

In 1890 Champneys, then 42 years of age and in the full vigour of life, became Chairman of this board.

He quickly realized that the development of these poorly educated, partially trained handy-women into an efficient service could be done only by Government action and, for the next ten years, while at the very height of his busy practice, he set himself the task of persuading the Government to sponsor a Bill which would control the training and examination of those wishful to enter the service, and the supervision of those in practice over the whole country.

This suggestion raised much opposition. From the medical profession, who feared that a well-trained body of midwives would reduce medical obstetric practice; from the midwives who were already in practice and feared supervision of their work and comparison with the new order; and from the laity who would be called upon to provide the money.

Champneys, and the men working with him, by education and persuasion gradually bore down all opposition and the Bill became law in 1902, setting up the Central Midwives Board with charge of a Register of midwives, to which candidates were to be admitted only when the Board was satisfied with their training and examination, and from which names were to be erased when the Board was dissatisfied with the standard of practice.

To obtain an Act to train, examine and supervise the whole body of midwives was one thing, to administer it and especially to raise the standard of the service so as to attract to it women of a higher social status and education was a much more difficult matter.

Although the ultimate object was to pro-

vide women with better attendance at their confinements and to reduce maternal mortality, it was impossible to suspend the physiological activity of parturition until such time as the service was reorganized, and even if this had been possible it would have removed the very teaching material upon which the new service depended.

The administration of this Act was invested in the new Central Midwives Board, whose first chairman Champneys became.

At that period there were, scattered over the whole country, only a small number of hospitals with a trained obstetric staff. To arrange for the training, which for the first time was to be institutional, of a sufficient number of candidates to replace the yearly wastage; to organize examinations which could be gradually raised in standard; to attract to the service candidates with a higher general education; above all, to supervise the work of those in practice so as to raise the general level of their work without removing so many that the service might break down before the newly-trained candidates could take their place, was a Herculean task.

That these objects were attained and the service gradually raised to its present position without any reduction in the attendance upon parturient women in the transition period was due to the Central Midwives Board and above all to its Chairman, Sir Francis, who retained this post for 28 years, and through all this long period guided and directed it on practical, commonsense lines.

Under a Chairman with less vision, faith and dynamic force, progress would have been slower and probably halted at a lower level; under one with less patience and less realization of the practical issues the result would have been chaotic.

It is only those who worked with midwives practising in the period before the Act

who can fully appreciate the changes which have been wrought in that service.

As women devoted to their work and to their patients, willing at all times to sacrifice leisure and comfort to their duty, I retain the happiest memories of them, but in training and professional knowledge many were little better than the untrained handy-women they were supposed to replace. The fees, in those far-off days, were so low that well-educated women were not attracted to the service; the candidates generally being married women with families, or widows, who wished to supplement the family income.

So poor was the general standard of education of those in practice that many of them could not understand, and therefore derived little benefit from, the course of lectures they had attended, while their clinical training had consisted only in the attendance upon a limited number of confinements with some midwife, who, herself, had received a training little better than that of a handy-woman.

Now the midwife is drawn from a higher social scale with good general education, and the majority are already State Registered nurses.

Their training is long and thorough, and most of it is institutional. The midwives now have their own College, and their position is assured.

That this profession has been raised from what it was forty years ago to what it is to-day, one of the finest midwives' services in the world, and this without depriving any woman in the transition period of the help which is her due, is the most enduring monument to his memory.

One disadvantage of a centenary celebration is the improbability of the address being given by a contemporary.

Although I can claim personal knowledge of Sir Francis only during his last five years, I knew of his work and his recog-

nized leadership throughout my whole professional life.

As a medical student I heard the controversies raised by his Midwives Act. Soon after the passing of this Act, I was, amongst other duties, responsible for some years for the work of a group of midwives admitted to the new Register by virtue of the fact that they were in practice when the Act was passed, and for some years I was an Examiner for the Central Midwives Board. I was thus in a position to note the gradual change in training, examination, and in the status of the midwife, brought about by his wise administration.

It was only in 1925 that I met him in person, when a group of us were laying plans to found what has since become the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists.

In those days most of the driving force and optimism for this scheme came from outside London and it was felt, at this date, that our path would be made easier if it was known that we had the support of some of the seniors and acknowledged leaders in London.

One of our group, therefore, arranged a dinner party to which were bidden five of these seniors to meet a small number of our group, and it fell to my lot to explain what we had in mind and to try to convert the seniors to it.

Sir Francis was then 77 years of age, but would easily have passed for a man of 60, and in appearance and mental vigour was a younger man than several of the other guests who, in fact, were much his junior in years.

Rather below middle stature, with a sturdy frame and broad shoulders. An aristocratic face with well-formed nose and determined chin, blue piercing eyes which looked directly at you when he spoke, a sweeping, white moustache, and his head still covered with a good crop of beautiful

white hair. A strong, compelling face upon which authority sat lightly as upon one born to lead. A face saved from hardness or fastidiousness by a mobile mouth and the sweetness of his smile, which frequently irradiated his face when in conversation.

During dinner it was clear that his leadership was acknowledged and that, if he were convinced and became an enthusiastic supporter, our task would be lightened.

That evening, although so long ago, is deeply impressed upon my memory.

Seated at one end of the table opposite to our host, he kept the conversation circulating upon interesting and amusing topics. After dinner, when the servants had withdrawn and we opened the serious business of the evening, his receptive mind rapidly grasped the essentials while his shrewd questions uncovered the doubtful points.

None of us at that dinner party guessed that this cheerful, alert, charming man, apparently without a care in the world, had arranged to enter a nursing home the following day for a serious major operation. It was from the home that he wrote to me the first of the many letters which ceased only with death, five years later.

From the first I was greatly attracted to him and as he took the trouble to show that he liked me, this attraction deepened into something much richer during these five years up to his death.

During this time we corresponded regularly, frequently met, and on one occasion he spent a week with me.

The affinity no doubt was strengthened by the fact that our minds normally ran along the same lines, and therefore then we were generally acting together in the many discussions and disputes amongst those founding the College.

When, after long delay, the College was founded, age and the state of his health precluded the possibility of his being the

first President, and so a special office, that of Vice-Patron, was devised, an office which has not been filled since his death.

Blessed with a strong constitution and abounding vitality, he had been able to devote to public objects an amazing amount of time and energy for one so busy in the practice of his profession and now, in the twilight of retirement, he continued his support of objects which his still alert and active brain knew to be of public service.

If I were asked to name his most characteristic feature it would be his fearless honesty and loathing of anything underhand. On many occasions the object we had at heart could have gained a point by subterranean methods, but these he strenuously opposed.

His principle in life was that an object worthy of attainment should be openly proclaimed.

It was this transparent honesty of purpose, combined with patience and a gift of exposition, which accounted for the success of the objects he had at heart, and which gave him his leadership.

No one could be long in his presence without being aware from whence sprang his strength and his patience.

Brought up in an evangelical household, his early beliefs were strengthened and broadened by his happy married life. There was nothing sanctimonious or depressing in his Christianity and his presence brought out the best in other men.

My last visit to him was in his beautiful home in Nuttley, a short time before his death.

He was cheerful and bright, and his conversation was chiefly about the College and its future development. He was gravely ill and we both knew it was the last time we should meet. His mind was as clear as ever, and his remarks as shrewd. He had suffered much pain and distress, but not a

word of complaint was uttered, only gratitude to the doctors and nurses for the relief they had afforded him.

He impressed me as being pleased to relinquish a life which had become a burden and, since the death of his wife, lonely, and that he looked forward with faith to their reunion.

And so I left him, surrounded by all that was dearest and had most influenced his life.

Attended by his family with loving care he overlooked, through the large window, the garden he had made and tended and the lofty drawing room with his organ, his daily solace, and Watt's portrait of his wife, loving companion of 46 years.

And at the side of the room his *prie-dieu*, no mere piece of furniture or decoration, from whose habitual use he drew his strength and inspiration.

